

## **Other current Healthy Marriage Funding Opportunities**

### **Special Improvement Projects (Office of Child Support Enforcement) (<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/open/HHS-2006-ACF-OCSE-FI-0005.html>)**

The Office of Child Support Enforcement is offering a funding announcement for Special Improvement Projects (SIP) that includes funding for healthy marriage. All Tribes are eligible for SIP funding. The purposes of the SIP grant program are to provide funding for projects that further the national child support mission and goals and to help improve program performance. SIP's legislative authority is Section 452(j) of the Social Security Act, which provides Federal funds for research and demonstration programs and special projects of regional or national significance relating to the operation of state child support enforcement programs. No applicant match is required. Program announcements are normally issued annually. Eligible applicants include state and local public agencies, non-profit agencies (including faith-based organizations), and tribal organizations.

Listed below are the two priority areas under the SIP announcement that include healthy marriage. This announcement closes May 24, 2006. Please refer to the OCSE funding webpage for more information.

#### **Priority Area 1: 2 awards/4 years (12-month periods)**

Promoting Healthy Relationships for Unwed Couples to Improve Children's Financial and Medical Security

##### **Description**

A recent study on child support and minorities indicates that only 50 percent of unwed couples who establish paternity at the time of the birth of their child, establish an order for child support after three years. Often, unwed fathers establish paternity in the hospital directly after the birth of their children. They provide information regarding their residence and basis for payment of the hospital bills. At this time, the couple may intend to marry soon.

Under this solicitation, OCSE is looking for projects that develop and implement innovative strategies that will lead to regular financial and medical support for children while: (a) minimizing the need for adversarial proceedings, or formal administrative or judicial proceedings, or (b) minimizing the need to take formal or punitive actions to collect support that is owed by a noncustodial parent. Strategies might include the applicant agency and/or its partners encouraging voluntary paternity establishment coupled with providing information (and referral

services) to unwed parents about the benefits of healthy marriage and the impact on the financial security of children; and/or providing dispute resolution services for low-income parents regarding child support and visitation matters. Projects should develop and demonstrate creative new ways of periodically getting information to the unwed parents and providing effective long-term follow-up with the couple once the parents leave the hospital.

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## **Priority Area 2: 2 awards/2 years (12-month periods)**

### **Improving Child Support by Encouraging Parents and CSE Agencies to Work Together for Better Case Management and Results**

#### **Description**

States report that customer service surveys indicate both custodial parents (CPs) and noncustodial parents (NCPs) often do not provide case-relevant information in a timely matter. This can result in the setting of inaccurate orders, which, in many cases, is a barrier to collections. On the other hand, there is evidence that agencies may not always respond promptly and accurately to the information provided by NCPs and CPs that can lead to problems such as arrears build-up, undistributed collections, or a shortfall of support.

The presumption is that increased involvement of parents and assurance that agency staff would act quickly on information provided by parents would lead to more accurate orders and collections. Projects would train staff to apply skills and work organization tools that will help workers to consider and approach their customers as partners in the child support process; and provide information to NCPs and CPs in partnering in the progress of their child support cases.

OCSE is looking for innovative strategies for working with parents that are primarily intended to improve performance in key child support measures (found in the National Child Support Enforcement Strategic Plan) and increase healthy family formation. Projects would demonstrate innovative ways to educate parents about the establishment of parentage and their roles and responsibilities in the CSE process and encourage parents to meet those responsibilities. Approaches could include enhanced websites, better service of process, use of stipulated (voluntary) agreements between both parents on child support and related matters, and education on the benefits of healthy marriage formation and referral to appropriate marriage education services. The projects should fit the demographics of the child support caseload in the area where the project would be conducted.

**Assets for Independence (AFI) Office of Community Services**  
(<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/open/HHS-2005-ACF-OCS-EI-0053.html>)

The Administration for Children and Families, Office of Community Services (OCS) will accept applications for financial assistance to establish and administer Assets for Independence (AFI) Projects. These projects assist low-income people in becoming economically self-sufficient. They do so by teaching project participants about economic and consumer issues and enabling them to establish matched savings accounts called Individual Development Accounts (IDA) in order to save for a first home, a business or higher education. Grantees must participate in an on-going national evaluation of the impact of AFI Projects and IDAs. --Organizations with projects that serve communities and groups that are less represented among the current AFI Projects such as residents of rural areas and Native American individuals or communities.

This information is not a healthy marriage program announcement however Assets for Independence (AFI) funding can provide financial support to an organization that is already conducting healthy marriage and/or relationship education projects. AFI can be used as a leveraged resource to enhance programs and benefit their communities. Grantees can also apply using methods that integrate asset-building work with other related vital activities such as promoting healthy marriage and family formation as a means of achieving safety, permanency, and well-being for children and families.

An example of leveraging ACF funding is having a healthy marriage program with an ANA project that provides marriage and relationship workshops and an AFI project funded by OCS that provides couples, individuals, and parents receiving marriage and relationship education the opportunity to also receive workshops on economic and consumer issues.

Throughout this announcement you will see references to marriage and how you can incorporate marriage in to an AFI project. Please see the AFI announcement page for more information.